

COMMISSION FOR JONAH *continued*

(b) THE POWER OF THIS COMMISSION: This call to duty comes as a sovereign word from Jehovah, full of authoritative and regal tones. This sovereignty is not only seen in *the manner* in which the commission comes, but also in *the task* to which it directs. God was asking this man to do something that there was no precedent for among the prophets – to step outside the boundaries of Israel and take His message right to the heart of heathendom! *“That mission was a solitary, unparalleled and unique transaction:... there had been nothing like it before ...”* (Hugh Martin).

(c) THE PRINCIPLE OF THIS COMMISSION: behind the call to Jonah to preach in Nineveh was the principle of God’s righteousness: *“...cry...for their wickedness is come up before Me.”* This was rather negative: Jonah was sent to Nineveh with a message that would have, not as its exclusive note, but its dominant note, God’s righteous anger against the sin of that society. The language used is similar to what God used when speaking of Sodom (**Genesis 18:20**). Their sin has risen to the pitch (cf. **Genesis 15:16**) whereby it was now either a case of immediate repentance or imminent ruin. While this world blabs on about its “rights,” God is still chiefly concerned with righteousness. This message must be proclaimed with faithfulness, boldness, tenderness, love and through tears.

(d) THE PRIVILEGE OF THIS COMMISSION: For the Lord to send His Word to Jonah (**1:1**) was a huge privilege, especially in times when there was a famine of the Word (cf. **Amos 8:11**).

(e) THE PRESSURE OF THIS COMMISSION: terms used in **Jonah 1:2** – *“Arise, go to Nineveh ...”* demand immediate action. Get up and go now! We have yet to fulfil the terms of the Great Commission as 1-in-5 people still wait for the Bible in their own language. *Who will go?*



MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:
“Introduction To The Prophet Jonah”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm: *“Faith Weeps At The Cross”*



50TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Friday evening, 29 November 2019, was a historic night for Martyrs Memorial FPC as we celebrated our 50th Anniversary on our current site. We were delighted to welcome our congregations and friends on this occasion, including more than 50 people who had been present on Opening Day, 4 October 1969 – including one lady who rescued from her attic the same red jacket she wore on opening day and put it on again for the night! Hymns that were sung during the 60s ascended up again as praise (including #137, 53 and 313) and men who formerly occupied the pews of Martyrs but later served in the pulpits of our denomination as ministers participated. Rev. William McCrea’s message from 1 Samuel 17 is available for listen and download on our Sermon Audio site and the new DVD, part of which was shown on the night) is now available to purchase. *“To God be the glory!”*



COMMISSION FOR JONAH

Jonah 1:1-2.

William Carey (1761-1834) is properly called, “*The father of modern missions.*” Unlike many men in his era, he believed that the ‘Great Commission’ of **Matthew 28:18-20** was a binding command on every generation of Christians. In May 1792 he published a manifesto – *An Enquiry in the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. The next year he responded to the passion that the Lord had implanted within his heart and left England with his family for India to engage in foreign missions. This study is **an Introduction to the Prophet Jonah** – a man who could be depicted as “*The father of earlier missions.*”

[1] THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHET.

Outside of this little 4-chapter book that bears his name, the Bible sets out some biographical detail about Jonah in **2 Kings 14:23-27**. This information is noted:

- (a) **THE FRONTIER FROM WHICH HE CAME.** Gath-hepher was his home town – an obscure village 3 miles north-east of Nazareth (cf. **Joshua 19:13**) and around 60-70 miles from Joppa. “Gath-hepher” means “winepress,” or “pit/shame” – signifying that when we are to do a work for God, we must begin in the winepress; the place of crushing (cf. Christ’s connection with the winepress; **Isaiah 63:1-3; Revelation 19:13-15**).
- (b) **THE FAMILY TO WHICH HE BELONGED.** Jonah was “the son of Amittai.” “Amittai” is the Hebrew word for “truth.” As the ‘son of truth’ he was a good choice for a servant of God (cf. **John 14:6**); all who speak in His Name must herald forth *the truth!*
- (c) **THE FEATURES HE MUST DISPLAY.** “Jonah,” which is the Hebrew word for “dove,” gives him a challenge to live up to his name – and points to characteristics necessary for God’s people:
 1. **Pace (Psalm 55:6)** ... our Lord operated at pace (**Luke 12:50**), so should we (**Psalm 119:60**);
 2. **Perfection / Purity (Psalm 68:13)** ... doves and turtle-doves – “clean” birds – were the only birds that could be offered in sacrifice, a special provision for the poor (**Genesis 15:9; Leviticus 5:7; 12:6;**

3. **Pace (Psalm 55:6)** ... our Lord is perfect (**Matthew 3:17**); we should strive for purity;
 3. **Passion (Song of Solomon 1:15; 2:14)**; we love the world for Christ’s sake (**John 13:1**);
 4. **Peace (Genesis 8:9)**: only in the shelter of the ark did the dove find safety; God’s messengers are despatched with a message of peace that is found only in Christ (**Nahum 1:15; Eph. 2:14-17; Acts 10:36**);
 5. **Plainness**: “harmlessness” [unmixed, free from guile] is a feature of our Master (**Hebrews 7:26**) and must be found in us (**Matt. 10:16**);
 6. **Procession / Power**: the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (**Genesis 1:2; Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22**). Dependence on Him;
 7. **Pity (Isaiah 38:14; 59:11; Nahum 2:7)**: peace and weeping go together (cf. **Jonah 1:2** with **Luke 19:41-42**). **Psalm 126:6** is our assurance: give us God’s love for the souls of men!
- (d) **THE FIGHT IN WHICH HE MUST ENGAGE.** Every city has its own crest (every club within it its own badge). The dove is also associated with Assyria (therefore Nineveh) as a companion of their goddess Ishtar (the ‘Great Mother’ of Assyrian culture) and was placed on the standards of the Assyrians and Babylonians in honour of Queen Semiramis. Interesting that Jonah – with a name meaning dove – was sent into the dove’s nest, to the place of the palace of the goddess – and would prevail there by the preaching of the message of peace (cf. **Isaiah 9:6-7**).
- (e) **THE FOCUS HE MUST LEARN.** Jonah prophesied during the reign of the wicked king Jeroboam II (**2 Kings 14:23-24**), but – quite incredibly – predicted a gracious extension of the kingdom in his day. Only God can show mercy to the undeserving (a vital marker for Jonah for his future ministry in Nineveh).

[2] THE COMMISSION OF THE PROPHET.

Described in **Jonah 1:1-2**:

- (a) **THE PLACE OF THIS COMMISSION:** Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. This “great city” was great in **Geographical Size** (cf. **Jonah 3:3**) with a circumference of approx. 60 miles (consisting of current ruins of Kouyunjik, Nimrud, Karamless and Khorsabad); in **Population** (cf. **Jonah 4:11**: with 120,000 infants, its total population would have been anything between 750,000 and 2,000,000 / 6 x size of Belfast); great in **Physical Structure**, and **Influence** – but, most lamentably, great in its **Sin**; **Jonah 1:1-2**: this latter detail is what God turned the spotlight on: “*their wickedness is come up before Me.*”